~~1814~~

#16

A. S. Moore

71.

9th box

Corner of 8th & Walnut

Epilepsy

Epilepsy

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Introduction

Non est vivere, sed valere, vita. Mart.

It was my intention to have written on a Species of Eupatorium the medical qualities of which have lately been discovered (in South Carolina) to possess extraordinary virtues, in the cure of the bite of the Rattle Snake: but being disappointed in getting sufficient & satisfactory information relative to this plant; I am obliged at a late period of this course to make choice of an other subject, & have now to beg your indulgence while I offer a few hasty remarks on Epilepsy.

Having had an opportunity of seeing this disease & its treatment, I make it the subject of the present dissertation, but not without some degree of diffidence, as I am aware of its being a disease difficult to understand; & when once completely formed that it has baffled the skill of some of the ablest physicians; & by many it has been thought incurable. I am inclined however to believe that this disease may be cured even in its most inveterate forms.

I trust it will not be considered arrogant at my early age in coming forward to attack this bold disease when I shall have stated some facts that confirm me in this opinion.

On this subject it will not be expected that I could give many original ideas as it has been ably treated by professors Cullen, Rush, & Barton; & in preparing this dissertation I avail myself of the information which I have acquired from these gentlemen, & also from my own observation, which although limited I hope will not be without interest.

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In submitting this Essay to the examination of the Faculty, I would feel much anxiety for its fate, were I not sensible that their candour, & liberality, are equal to their learning.

An Essay on Epilepsy.

This disease is placed by Doct. Cullen in the class of Neuroses, & third order of Spasmi.

It is defined, as consisting in convulsions of the greater part of the muscles of voluntary motion, attended with a loss of sense, & ending in a state of insensibility & sunning sleep.

It has frequently been observed that the general character and form of the disease appears the same in all the different persons upon whom it affects. It comes on with convulsions ~~of the greater part~~ & sometimes attacks persons apparently in good health. After continuing for some time it goes off leaving the patient in his usual health. These fits are sometimes preceded by premonitory signs, such as a general restlessness, & uneasiness, headach, vertigo, bitter taste in the mouth, odour of breath, redness of the face, noise in the ears, palpitation, constipation of the bowells together with flatulency of the stomach, & intestines, & pain in some of the extremities, pimples on the tongue, sleepiness, & all the horrors of death anticipated by the unfortunate person.

These signs will frequently appear two or three days before the fall, particularly in the first fits, & afterwards come on frequently without any previous warning.

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Before the fit comes on in other persons there is a sensation
called the Aura Epileptica. The patient describes it as if
a drop of cold water, or vapour was moving in some part
of the limbs, or body, most frequently beginning in the toes, or
fingers; from thence ~~[illegible]~~ ascending upwards to the head, & when
it arrives there the person immediately falls down in an
epileptic fit. But these signs do not commonly appear
long before the attack, nor are they as frequent preludes
to those mentioned above. It is said by experienced
persons, that the best common warnings of the approach
of the falling sickness, (as it is called by the common
people,) are pains in the bowels, numbness of the extremities,
dimness of sight, blackness of the face, shortness of breath,
hiccup, vomiting & purging, pain in the back & disposition
to faint, & sometimes the fit will rise no higher than this,
the patient will escape ~~from~~ for a time the attack: but
most frequently the person falls in violent convulsions, the
limbs are variously agitated; sometime one side is more
agitated than the other, the countenance much distorted, the
eyes inverted, fingers clenched, there a foaming at the mouth,
sometimes mixed with blood, when (the tongue has been
bitten) He loses all sense of feeling, & sometimes involun-
tary

discharges of urine, & faeces. These convulsions last only a short time when an intermission takes place; but the fits are frequently renewed with great violence, & the length of time they last varies in different persons. After the convulsions have ceased, the patient generally falls into a stupid, insensible state, as if in a sound sleep; for 1, 2, or even 6 hours; he then gradually recovers his senses, but has no recollection of anything that took place in the paroxysm. During the fit the pulse & respiration are quick, & irregular, but after the convulsions, they return to their healthy state.

These are the general simptoms of the disease, but they vary in violence, & duration, in different persons, & at different times in the same person.

There is great variety in the returns of this disease, Many persons have several slight ~~fight~~ fits in a day - sometimes they occur seldomer once a day, or once a week - sometimes once a month, two, or three times a year - & the interval has been known to last 13 years, & then the attacks were renewed with greater violence.

The continuance of the fit is most commonly from a quarter of an hour, to 3 hours, & in more extraordinary cases the patient is stupid for two, or three days, during which time frequent convulsions occur. After convulsions some persons scarcely know that they have had them, being so little fatigued, or injured, while others feel great dullness, & numbness for several hours, or a head ache sickness & vomiting &

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do not recover their faculties entirely for several days. Persons of every age are liable to ~~to~~ Epilepsy but ~~if~~ it is oftener met with among children than grown persons, & there is a much greater probability of their getting rid of it. Boys are more subject to this disease than girls. Its returns are periodical & generally come on during the night, after the first nap, being some how influenced by sleep.

Convulsions are common with children from their birth to the 3 or 4 year & as this disease often ceases between the 3d & 6th year it is very probably occasioned by worms, or some affection of the stomach & intestines. In these cases there is always hope of a recovery.

Epilepsy has been observed to disappear about puberty when it commenced at an early age: but more frequently if it passes beyond five or six years it proves a tedious complaint. Some persons live to an old age in this disease & retain their faculties but little impaired, while others feel its enervating power, & realize its direful effects, in the ~~the~~ ruin of their mental faculties, & in death its self.

Diagnosis. Epilepsy resembles Hysteria excepting that the latter is attended with Globus Hysterica, & generally appears in barren, & single women. It is easily distinguished from Chorea by the latter most frequently having partial convulsions of the leg, & arm of one side, & the senses remaining but little impaired. I am inclined to ~~think~~ this disease nearly allied to the Jerks.

Epilepsy is distinguished from Tetanus by the latter

being attended with tonic spasms without the sinses being much impaired, & without being followed by sleep.

Epilepsia simulata may be easily distinguished from this disease by applying a Vol. Alkali, or by sticking the patient with a pin.

The occasional CAUSES of Epilepsy may be arranged under two heads first those that irritate the brain, & secondly those that weaken the brain. In the first when there is too great a quantity of blood carried by the arteries to the brain, & not being readily returned by the veins; the vessels are distended, the nerves affected & it is reasonable to suppose convulsions would come on. 2dly when there is not sufficient stimulus for the healthy action of the brain, convulsions take place - at other times syncope.

The Occasional causes are injuries of the head, pain, worms, teething, poisons, calculi, repelled eruptions, from costiveness, crudities in the stomach, from plethora - from debility, from suppression of customary evacuations, sudden frights in childhood which is a frequent cause of this disease, from Onanism - from fits of passion - great emotion of mind - frequent intoxication - Hemorrhage of various kinds. (At Vienna out of 14 Epileptic patients this disease was produced in 8 from suppressed catamenia & in 6 from terror) Sympathy may produce it. Doctor Rush mentioned in his Lectures 6 persons who fell down in convulsions at seeing a person in a fit, & that 5 of a Portugese family

had this disease. Doctor Barton relates in his lectures an instance
of a woman who fell down in a fit at seeing a chariot or fire.
Aegilia Marifandica has been known to produce this disease.
Predisponent Causes. Epilepsy is sometimes hereditary. At other
times it depends on a mobility of the sensorium; which Doctor
Cullen says consists ~~in~~ either in sensibility, or irritability, & depends
on one or the other. If an action excited, is by repetition rendered
more easily excited, & more vigorously performed; he considers this
as an increase of irritability only; & is the reason why Epilepsy
and convulsions of all kinds by being repeated are more easily
excited, readily become habitual, & are therefore more difficult
to cure. This mobility which is the predisponing cause depends
more particularly upon debility, or upon a plethoric state of
the system. Debility produces ~~an~~ sensibility which appears more
frequently in women, & children, who are the most frequent
subjects of this disease. Plethoric persons are frequent
subjects of this disease. Sleep disposes to this disease.
Exciting Causes. Excesses of all kinds, as intoxication, heat,
great exercise, fright, passions.
Appearances to be observed on dissection. dilation of some parts
of the brain, serous or sanguineous effusions - sometimes a longer
tense state of the brain without any effusion. Sometimes
ulcers appear - exfoliations, & at other times the brain is indurated.

Epilepsy has been usually distinguished into sympathic & idiopathic. It is called sympathic when it is produced from an affection of some other part of the body as from costiveness, bathing, or wounds. Called Idiopathic when it is a primary disease, & not dependant, or proceeding from any other.

In the cure of this disease I should be governed by the cause which occasioned it. When it is sympathic, & arises from a wound, or blow on the head, I should make use of the remedies recommended by Doctor Physick & Dorsey, in such cases, as blood letting, Cathartics, cold applications, & antiphlogistic regimen &c. If this disease is produced by worms, which are a frequent cause among children, I would use such remedies as would dislodge, or destroy them, as mercurial purges, warm bath &c. Doctor Barton cured a case produced from this cause by Valerian, so I should use this medium in combination with calomel. If the disease is caused by teething, we should scarify that part of the gums that appeared inflamed, open the bowels & bathe the feet in warm water. If fever comes on I should treat it as a fever, give saline draughts, spirits of Nitre, & Antimonials: after the inflamatory symptoms subside, & partial fever remain, I have found blisters behind the neck of great

nervous, ~~& to the extremities~~ to lessen the excitement in the head, bring on regular ~~action~~. After this obtained the cure will be performed. If this Disease is accompanied by the Aura Epileptica, we should endeavour to cut off the Communication with the brain by a Ligature, which is related to have succeeded in the hands of Professor Joffter of Altona. If this plan should not succeed, it is advised to cut out the part that gives rise to the Aura, or apply a Blister, or if the disease appears to proceed from compressed, or wounded Nerve, which can be come at, it would be proper to divide it as recommended in Tetanus. If the Disease proceeds from suppressed Evacuations such as Haemorrhoids, leeches should be applied, as near the Haemorrhoidal vessels as possible, Aloetic pills, and warm fomentations to the parts are recommended. If from Catamenia being suppressed I should employ the Remedies recommended by Dr. Chapman in that case. If the system be too much excited, I would bleed. If there be much debility, I would have recourse to nourishing Diet, Cathartics, Polygala Senega with some Aromatic, Elixir Paregoric, & the warm Bath.

Lucerne if in combustion

Remedies in the forming state of Epilepsy & to prevent the Disease
from coming on – Dashing cold water in the face, Running (by which
the excitement is thrown on the Muscles) Tenor, sulphur held
under the nose, fresh air, sinapisms, blisters to the feet & Ex-
tremities, loosening the Patients clothes, and elevating his head, are
all proper and useful – Dr Barton stopped a Paroxysm of
Epilepsy by Blisters and sinapisms – It is a fact well supported
that in some instances this Disease continues from Habit altho
the original cause have ceased to act, as in a case I saw occa-
sioned by Blows, the convulsions continued when their effects
otherwise were over – In such cases I hold it of the first impor-
tance to make Nature if possible discontinue the Habit, &
the best plan of doing this particularly if we can forese the
attack, or know the time of its return, is to give an Emetic of
Sulphate of Zinc & Sulphate of Copper, ~~and the day or night~~
an Hour before its approach – this dose nauseates extremely,
relaxes the System, & prevents the Paroxysm, as in Intermittent
fever: but if the Symptoms continue to increase, & the patient
be of a plethoric Habit, he should be bled – Cold affusion is
also of great service in putting off the Paroxysm – Venaesection

will be found peculiarly serviceable if the fits are periodical.
Blisters and Sinapisms should be applied to the feet to increase the
excitement in the Extremities, and Muscles, which will lessen it in
the nervous system, & assist very much in shortening the paroxysm.
In plethoric persons, a vegetable, and milk Diet, & Exercise are
necessary - Drastic Cathartics are of great importance as this
disease is generally attended with costiveness - After the
inflammatory symptoms are lessened we may give small
doses of Acetate of Lead, and Digitalis gradually increasing
them, & watching their Effects - Opium has been recommended
in combination with this Medicine to prevent Colica pictonum;
but I would not give it when there is much plethora & no
irritability, as it increases Costiveness, & the action of the Blood
vessels -
Bleeding is not advisable unless there be a great tendency of
blood to the head, & violent pain in that part - Low diet, Exercise
Cathartics, Emetics and Digitalis, are more useful in lessening
plethora, & do it more gradually & permanently - I have found
no inconvenience in giving the Medicine without Opium as
Drastic Cathartics were frequently exhibited - It should be
continued tile its desired effects are obtained - Seton should be

applied to the back of the neck and on the left arm. Whenever we apprehend a fit we should give an Emetic, throw cold water on the Head, avoid all the exciting causes. After the arterial action is completely reduced a Decoction of Viscus Quercinus may be taken as common Drink. By pursuing this course with attention, I believe a cure may be obtained tho' the Disease have been completely formed, & continued from Habit. I have seen it attended with success in cases to be mentioned in the Sequel. Inclusions drawn from the treatment recommended in Epilepsy, when there was marked Excitement in the system, and the disease continued from Habit. The emetics were given to put off the paroxysm, & the other Medicines, with a view of reducing arterial action to a healthy standard; without this we cannot expect a cure. The Mixture is given as a Tonic after reducing the system. At the same time the patient should be informed that it is a celebrated Remedy which may induce him to have faith in the Medicine. It is highly spoken of by Dr. Fraser who has written on Epilepsy. Setons are of service in determining occasional turgescences to the surface, & to divert their action from the Brain. Diet and Exercise assist in changing the Constitution which is necessary to a cure. On the contrary

have seen a variety of Remedies fail, which have been highly
commended, such as Bleeding, salivation, Antispasmodics,
Blisters, Tonics & cold Bath - The reason why these are not more
successful is that they have been prescribed indiscriminately without
taking into Consideration, the cause of the Disease, & the Constitu-
tion of the Patient -

In Idiopathic Epilepsy if the Patient be of a plethoric Constitu-
tion, we should treat the disease in the manner recommended above,
avoid the occasional cause, & endeavour to cure the predispo-
sing cause - When this Disease arises from Debility, & is of long
standing the cure becomes more difficult, but we should not
be discouraged from attempting it - The first intention of
cure is to endeavour to put off the Paroxysm by giving
an Emetic about an Hour before it is expected, cold affu-
sion before the fit, Blisters & Sinapisms to the Extremities
are useful Auxiliaries - In the intervals we would recom-
mend Exercise, a nourishing Diet, cold Bath & Tonics -
Antispasmodics are useful when there is much Mobility
& when the Spirits are dejected Asafetida, Camphor, amber
Musk may be resorted to - Dr Barton mentions three cures
made by him with Stramonium - it was also successful
in the hands of Dr Archer of Maryland - Dr Rush

commends it in combination with Opium, Camphor & Castor-
lerian, and Cupreum ammoniacum, are valuable Remedies.
Dr Ferrar says he has made compleat cures in persons with
le faces with ℥i-℥ii of Argate given in the Twenty four Hours.
Hubbard relates a cure by means of Injections of Musk-
l nitrate of silver has been lately used with considerable
dvantage in Epilepsy when this Disease has been of many
ars Standing - Two cases of its success in the first and
cond volumes of the Physical Journal - Dr White
f Georgia beginning with one sixth of a grain of this
edicine increased the dose to eight grains in one day
cured his Patient - It has been proposed to treat Epilepsy
ith Mercury, which I have seen tried without effect.
Dr Hoffman cured one case by this plan; If used at
l it would be proper to combine it with Valerian. —
here the returns are periodical Bark and Arsenic are
commended - the cold Bath very important - so are
ercise, company, change of Climate & long Journey -
camp life is said to have cured Cesar - Blistering
l over the Body is said to have completed cures, & have
en employed in the case of Bonaparte: Falling into
l fire has been known to effect a cure

It has been already observed that Epilepsy is frequently occasioned by costiveness, cacoethes, & different affections of the stomach, & by worms, & poisons. In these cases is it not probable that the treatment recommended by Dr Hamilton of Edinburgh, supported by the experience of Dr Chapman - in cases of Chorea, Hysteria, & Tetanus, be of advantage By the use of frequent & long continued purges, might we not expect to break the associations of the disease, & induce a change in the constitution? As the above diseases are the consequence of peculiar mobility of the system, & are cured by means of Cathartics, which destroy that mobility, the same treatment applied to a disease depending on the same cause, would probably be equally successful.

Case 1. March 6. 1813 Caroline

A youth of 17. years of age of a plethoric constitution was attacked with Epilepsy. It was thought to have been brought on by blows received some time before. He knew when the fit was coming on by a pain in his head with other premonitory signs common before an attack. He then fell down in violent convulsions with a loss of sense & ending in sleep. They returned frequently His physician treated him by bloodletting together with a variety of medicines. After trying this mode of treatment four months unsuccessfully the patient was ~~removed home where he was~~ (~~now school~~) attended by Doctor Paxton & myself. When I saw him first his face was pale sallow & bloated & his countenance dejected. His pulse was full & tense, at the same time he felt great languor;

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his appetite was bad, & he was occasionally attacked with Hemorrhoids. At this time there was no complaint of the blows that had been received, as remedies had been used, but still the convulsions continued. I considered the disease completely formed, & continued, by the power of habit; & so, the first indication of cure was to make nature discontinue this habit. July 15. 1813 We began by giving an emetic of sulphate of Zinc & sulphate of copper combined - it operated very well, & nauseated considerably for some time. Afterwards, he was put on a milk & vegetable diet - advised moderate exercise, & to avoid all occasional, & exciting causes - to wear loose clothes, sleep with the head elevated, & when he felt symptoms of the fit to take an emetic, & have a bucket of cold water poured on his head. 2d day no return of fit - took a cathartic of Calomel, Jalap & Gamboge, which operated frequently, & weakened him a little, but he felt relieved. 3 day no return of fit. He took 3xg Lead & Digitalis gr iij twice a day made in pills. The Digitalis was gradually increased - a Seton was applied in the back of the neck. 4 day the pills were continued - pulse a little reduced - 5 & 6 days continued the pills, no particular change. 7 day took a drastic cathartic which operated frequently - pulse reduced. 8 day continued pills, & took for common drink, a decoction of Viscus Quercinus. 9 & 10 continued pills & pulse low, stationary weakened - broke out but returned with symptoms of a fit. The cold affusions prevented. He followed the directions very strictly.

This treatment was continued for near 4 weeks

about the 3 Week his Spirits, & Appetite began to return & he seemed much better. Moderate exercise & Company was advised - &c & the use of medicine, & the seton was removed - Aloetic pills were given every other night for a week to obviate costiveness - By this mode of treatment he was completely cured. I have lately heard he is in good health.

Case 2d. 1811.

Thomas Gray, a youth of 16 was ~~cured of~~ epileptic (which he had had from his childhood) by the same treatment as in Case 1st. He has had no return of the disease.

Case 3.

A gentleman 40 years of age who had Idiopathic Epilepsy ~~pursued the same treatment~~, & when I left home was much benefitted, & had no ~~return of the fits~~. However six weeks only has elapsed which is not ~~sufficient~~ time to try the remedy.

I have now come to a close, and it only remains for me to return my sincere thanks, to each of the Professors of this University, for the potiency, & valuable information I have received. —

Phila

March 10th 1812